

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01097 111634Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 DHA-02 MCT-01
/099 W

-----111638Z 019294 /43

P R 111520Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7480
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBAXX BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBBY RABAT
USMISSION USUN
CINCEUR

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR, MO, AG

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: GIRM PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGES ZOUERATE
ATTACK THEN UNLEASHES PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 1026, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1033

1. IN FIRST MAJOR, MILITARY-RELATED PROPAGANDA DRIVE LAUNCHED
BY MAURITANIANS SINCE JUNE 1976 ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT, GIRM-
CONTROLLED PRESS AND RADIO ON MAY 5 INITIATED BITTER CONDEM-
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PAGE 02 NOUAKC 01097 111634Z

NATION OF MAY 1 "ALGERIAN-SPONSORED" ATTACK ON ZOUERATE. QUOT-
ING PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH IN SPEECH DELIVERED AT CLOSING
OF THIRD NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN "CHAAB",
GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY, CONDEMNS "AGGRESSION PERPETUATED
BY MERCENARIES FROM ALGIERS AGAINST CITY OF ZOUERATE.
PROVIDING PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF BATTLEFIELD FIGHTING, OULD DADDAH
IS QUOTED AS STATING ATTACK LEFT TWO FRENCH AND THREE MAURITANIANS

DEA, ANOTHER 15 WOUNDED AND SIX FRENCH AND FOUR MAURITANIANS TAKEN HOSTAGE. PRESIDENT CONTINUED THAT GIRM FORCES WERE FOLLOWING MERCENARIES IN TWO DIRECTIONS AND THAT, ALTHOUGH FINAL RESULTS OF FIGHTING WERE INCOMPLETE, HE COULD ANNOUNCE THAT ENEMY LOSSES INCLUDED 15 VEHICLES DESTROYED (SEVEN OF WHICH INCLUDED THEIR OCCUPANTS), 10 ENEMY DEAD IN SUBSEQUENT SEARCH OF BATTLEFIELD AND ANOTHER 10 ENEMY GRAVES FOUND BY PURSUING GIRM FORCES.

2. BANNER HEADLINE IN "CHAAB" FOLLOWING DAY UPDATED MILITARY STATISTICS BASED ON DETAILED ACCOUNTING RECEIVED BY MAURITANIAN NATIONAL PRESS (PRESUMABLY FROM PRESIDENCY). ARTICLE STATES THAT INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INDICATES ENEMY LOSSES INCLUDED 50 DEAD AND 20 VEHICLES DESTROYED IN WAKE OF ZOUERATE ATTACK. ACCORDING TO "A CODED MESSAGE SENT BY THE MERCENARIES (WHO WERE) CLOSE TO PANIC AND INTERCEPTED BY OUR VALIANT MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES REVEALS THAT THE COLUMN OF MERCENARIES HAS AMONG ITS RANKS SEVERAL SERIOUSLY WOUNDED OFFICERS INCLUDING THE COLONEL WHO HAD LED THE OPERATION (AGAINST ZOUERATE)". CONDEMNING THIS ALGERIAN-BACKED AGGRESSION, "CHAAB" ARTICLE CONCLUDES THAT ATTACK "AGAINST PEACEFUL MINING CITY OF ZOUERATE PROVES ONCE AGAIN THE PERFIDIOUS AND CRIMINAL CHARACTER OF THE BANDS FROM ALGIERS WHOSE OBJECTIVES WERE MORE CIVILIAN THAN MILITARY".

3. MAURITANIAN MEDIA INTENSIFIED ATTACKS MAY 9 WITH PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH TAKING BROADSIDE AT PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE AND FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS CLAIMING IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NOUAKC 01097 111634Z

PRESS INTERVIEW THAT "THE MERCENARIES ARE LED BY OFFICERS OF THE ALGERIAN REGULAR ARMY". SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDING ANY REFERENCE TO POLISARIO, PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH TOLD INTERNATIONAL MCSS CONFERENCE THAT "ALGERIAN AGGRESSION REINFORCES (OUR) DETERMINATION TO DEFEND (OUR) INTEGRITY". IN PERSONAL ATTACK AGAINST BOUMEDIENNE FOR HIS ABOUT-FACE ON SAHARA ISSUE, OULD DADDAH QUOTED EXERPT OF SPEECH ALLEGEDLY DELIVERED BY BOUMEDIENNE AT 1974 ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT IN RABAT IN WHICH LATTER STATED, "GIVEN THAT THE TWO STATES (MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA) HAVE FALLEN INTO AGREEMENT, ALGERIA CAN ONLY BLESS IT". DURING INTERVIEW WITH REUTERS CORRESPONDENT SAME DAY, FOREIGN MINISTER MOUKNASS DECLARED THAT "THE COLUMN OF MERCENARIES WAS COMMANDED BY ALGERIAN REGULAR ARMY OFFICERS". FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION TO FRANCE AND STATED THAT "AFTER THE INCIDENTS AT ZOUERATE (HE) WANTED TO UNDERLINE THE TOTAL AND PERFECT COOPERATION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN (HIS) COUNTRY AND MOROCCO". FINAL MAY 9 ATTACK AGAINST BOUMEDIENNE CAME IN FORM OF FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL

IN "CHAAB", WRITTEN BY GIRM MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAMADOU ALASSANE BA, ENTITLED "NO TO BOUMEDIENNE". AFTER ACCUSING BOUMEDIENNE OF TRYING TO "COLONIZE" MAURITANIA, PROVIDING DETAILED EXPLANATION OF WHY BOUMEDIENNE CANNOT SUCCEED AND ASKING IF BOUMEDIENNE HAD NEVER LEARNED LESSONS OF HISTORY, BA SPECULATES THAT IF ALGERIA OF BOUMEDIENNE CANNOT UNDERSTAND IMPOSSIBILITY OF STIFLING MAURITANIAN DETERMINATION, THE "MAYBE THE ALGERIA AFTER BOUMEDIENNE WILL UNDERSTAND IT".

4. FOCUSING ON BILATERAL FRENCH/MAURITANIAN RELATIONS DURING MAY 8 PRESS CONFERENCE, PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH SAID MAURITANIA HAD NO PLANS TO REQUEST FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL. OULD DADDAH CLAIMED MAURITANIANS ALREADY HAD ARMY OF SUFFICIENT NUMBERS AND ARMS, "EVEN IF FOR US THE AFFAIR OF ZOUERATE WAS A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE". NOTING CURRENT VISIT OF FRENCH MINISTER OF COOPERATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 NOUAKC 01097 111634Z

GALLEY, OULD DADDAH SAID MAURITANIA LOOKED TO FRANCE PRIORLY IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IN MILITARY SECTOR, FRENCH ALREADY PROVIDE INSTRUCTORS FOR MILITARY ACADEMY IN ATAR AND GIRM "BUYS MATERIAL AND ARMAMENTS FROM FRENCH MARKETS AS (THEY DO) FROM OTHER MARKETS". IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT QUESTION CONCERNING SIX FRENCH HOSTAGES TAKEN BY POLISARIO AT ZOUERATE, OULD DADDAH SAID FATE OF HOSTAGES HAD LED GIRM FORCES TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN ATTACKING "TRANSPORT VEHICLES" AMONG RETREATING MERCENARY COLUMN. PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH SAID HE BELIEVED IT WAS NECESSARY TO WAIT FOR HOSTAGES TO ARRIVE "EITHER IN ALGERIS OR IN ONE OF THE MERCENARY CAMPS TO HAVE A CHANCE OF RECOVERING THEM".

5. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE GIRM FORCEFUL, ALBEIT BELATED, PUBLIC ATTACK AGAINST ZOUERATE ATTACK FORCE REFLECTS AT LEAST TWO FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS: (A) AS WAS CASE DURING LAST JUNE ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT, DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF FOREIGNERS RESIDENT IN MAURITANIA DURING ATTACK BROUGHT INCIDENT INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY TO WHICH GIRM FELT COMPELLED TO RESPOND; AND (B) THAT PERHAPS EXAGGERATED CLAIMS MADE BY GIRM IN ITS UNACCUSTOMED ROLE AS COMPETITOR WITH POLISARIO FOR INTERNATIONAL HEADLINES ARE GOOD BAROMETER OF DEGREE GIRM WAS STUNG BY ZOUERATE ATTACK. WITH RUMORS OF ZOUERATE ATTACK ALREADY RAMPANT IN NOUAKCHOTT BY MAY 2, WITH INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF ATTACK BEGINNING TO FILTER BACK TO MAURITANIAN CAPITAL SHORTLY THEREAFTER AND WITH POLISARIO BROADCASTS EMANATING FROM ALGIERS ALREADY BEARING SDAR VERSION OF ZOUERATE ATTACK, GIRM REALLY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ADDRESS ISSUE HEAD ON. PUBLISHED STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN HARSH

AND UNCOMPROMISING AND HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY CRITICAL
OF ALGERIANS AND PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE. ALTHOUGH CERTAIN
PORTIONS OF ABOVE GIRM ACCOUNTS (SUCH AS 50 POLISARIO
DEAD) MAY WELL BE EXAGGERATIONS, WE ALSO DETECT A CER-
TAIN UNEASINESS IN GIRM EFYLANATIONS OF HOW ATTACK
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PAGE 05 NOUAKC 01097 111634Z

FORCE INFILTRATED, OCCUPIED AND SUCCESSFULLY RETREATED
FROM CITY WHICH, BY GIRM STANDJDS AT LEAST, WAS HEAVI-
LY GUARDED.

FARLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROPAGANDA, GROUND COMBAT OPERATIONS, ALLEGATIONS
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NOUAKC01097
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770166-0160
Format: TEL
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770570/aaaaciku.tel
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 NOUAKCHOTT 1026, 77 NOUAKCHOTT 1033
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2569237
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA WATCH: GIRM PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGES ZOUERATE ATTACK THEN UNLEASHES PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR, MO, AG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/66b6ba96-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009